

# KENTUCKY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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## KENTUCKY RECEIVES HIGH MARKS FOR SCHOOL BREAKFAST

(FRANKFORT, Ky.) – Kentucky has one of the highest participation rates in the nation for schoolchildren who eat both lunch and breakfast at school, according to an annual report by the Food Research and Action Center (FRAC).

Each year since 1990, FRAC has released its *School Breakfast Scorecard*, which provides data and information on states' implementation of the federal School Breakfast Program. The *Scorecard* is designed to document the current state of the program as well as to present recommendations on administrative and legislative improvements that can be undertaken at local, state and national levels to immediately get healthy school breakfasts to more of the nation's children.

In the 2008 *Scorecard*, Kentucky ranks fifth nationwide in the percentage of low-income students who eat both breakfast and lunch at school. For the 2007-08 school year, 57 percent of Kentucky students who ate lunch also ate breakfast at school. Only New Mexico (62.9 percent), South Carolina (60.2 percent), West Virginia (57.4 percent) and Oklahoma (57.2 percent) had higher rates of participation. Nationwide, 45.9 percent of students who eat school lunch also eat school breakfast.

New Mexico provides state funding for universal school breakfast; South Carolina and West Virginia mandate that school breakfast be offered in all schools. Oklahoma has no state requirements related to school breakfast.

Kentucky does not provide additional funding or mandate that schools provide school breakfast, although it is encouraged. State law (KRS 157.065) requires that schools that do not serve breakfast report the reasons why and any problems that inhibit participation to the Kentucky Department of Education. Another state law (KRS 158.070) requires that school districts arrange bus schedules so that children arrive in sufficient time to participate in breakfast prior to the start of the instructional day.

(more)

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FRAC's report offers evidence for the importance of school breakfast:

- **Eating breakfast improves school performance** -- Researchers report that children who skip breakfast have more difficulty distinguishing among similar images, show increased errors and have slower memory recall. Eating breakfast improves math grades, vocabulary skills and memory.
- **Eating breakfast reduces behavioral problems** -- Teenagers experiencing hunger are more likely to be suspended from school, have difficulty getting along with other children, and to have few friends. Studies have shown that students who participate in school breakfast have lower rates of absence and tardiness and exhibit decreased behavioral and psychological problems.
- **School breakfast improves children's diets** -- Breakfasts served as part of the School Breakfast Program are required to provide one-fourth or more of the key nutrients children need every day and contain no more than 30 percent of calories from fat and 10 percent of calories from saturated fat. USDA research shows that children who participate in school breakfast eat more fruits, drink more milk and consume a wider variety of foods than those who do not eat school breakfast or who have breakfast at home.
- **School breakfast can help reduce obesity** -- Children and adolescents who eat breakfast are significantly less likely to be overweight, while skipping breakfast is associated with a higher risk of obesity. Researchers suggest that people who do not eat breakfast get very hungry later on in the day and tend to overeat as a result — consuming more calories each day than they would if they had eaten breakfast in the morning. School breakfast helps ensure that children will not be tempted to overeat at other meals or snack before lunch. School breakfast also helps build lifelong healthy eating habits.

Only about five Kentucky public schools do not offer school breakfast, primarily because of a lack of interest by students.

The United States Department of Agriculture, through its Food and Nutrition Service, administers the School Breakfast Program at the federal level. The School Breakfast Program provides per-meal cash reimbursements from the federal government to public and nonprofit private schools and residential childcare institutions. Household income determines if a child is eligible to receive free or reduced-price meals.

The Food Research and Action Center (FRAC), based in Washington, D.C., is the leading national nonprofit organization working to improve public policies and public-private partnerships to eradicate hunger and undernutrition in the United States. FRAC works with hundreds of national, state and local nonprofit organizations, public agencies and corporations to address hunger and its root cause, poverty.

The full *School Breakfast Scorecard* can be seen at <http://www.frac.org/>.

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